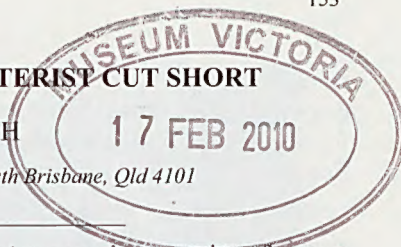


ROSS IAN STOREY – A COLEOPTERIST CUT SHORT

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This special issue of the *Australian Entomologist* comprises a series of papers on Australian Coleoptera dedicated to the memory of Ross Ian Storey (1949-2008), who died of pneumonia in Cairns Base Hospital on 14 June, 2008. This contribution deals with his early years in Australia and his ongoing interest in Australian Coleoptera. A second paper (Fay 2010: this issue) deals with his time in Mareeba and his many interests apart from coleopteran taxonomy.

Arrival in Australia

Ross was born in Canada in 1949, grew up in Vancouver and had one sibling, his younger brother Jay. He did his B.Sc at nearby Victoria University in the late 1960s and during his course he became interested in scarabaeine dung beetles. However, temperate British Columbia had just a couple of species and Ross dreamt of tropical beetle diversity. In 1971, soon after graduating, he bought a ticket to Sydney, found some cheap accommodation and began applying for any sort of insect-related work. He was just 21 years old. Dr Peter Blood, then insect ecologist at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, needed an assistant to trap and sort sheep blowflies and Ross was appointed for two years.

University of Queensland days

The UQ Entomology Department was then in its prime, with many people interested in the native fauna and a large research collection (which the present writer then curated). There were many postgrads and technical staff of Ross' own age and the fresh-faced young Canadian (Fig. 1) fitted in immediately and soon became a friend to everyone. He was gregarious, positive about everything, had outrageous tastes in music, loved a beer, had strong political ideas and knew sport from ice hockey to cricket. But most of all he was passionate about insects. His new job was a dream come true. His main duty was to go to the SW Queensland blowfly study site near Inglewood by himself for a few days every couple of weeks, catch blowflies in many different habitats using rotten liver baits, then sort the catch back at the lab. By using dung baits as well, he was able to also sample the dung beetles. Soon after this began, Eric Matthews' magnificent revision of the Australian members of the diverse dung beetle genus *Onthophagus* was published (Matthews 1972), as the first part of a series monographing the whole fauna. This gave Ross the ability to identify his dung beetle catches and he soon published collection lists of 21 species from Bald Mountain and 19 species from Inglewood, including many significant new distribution

records (Storey 1973a, b). This was the beginning of his exploration and discovery of the Australian dung beetles, which became his prime interest for the rest of his life. His scarabaeine enthusiasm was to draw many others (e.g. Tom Weir, Chris Reid and myself) to the dung beetle altar.

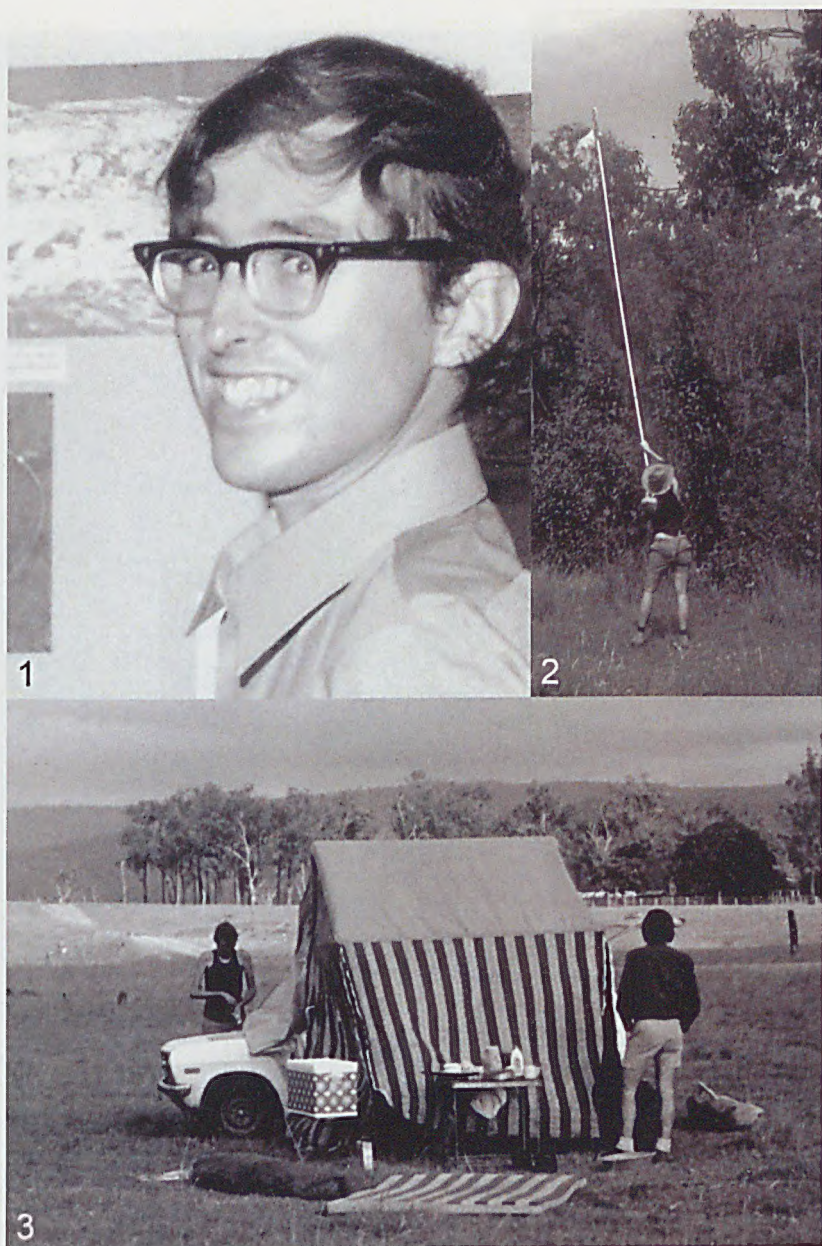
Within months of his arrival in Brisbane, Ross and I were to undertake a minor dung beetle epiphany. While camped in the rainforest at Tooloom Scrub (NSW), eating watermelon on a hot day, we watched in astonishment as a large dung beetle (*Cephalodesmius armiger*) emerged from a burrow, carved off a lump of red flesh from a discarded watermelon skin and carried it back into its burrow. The burrow contained no dung but many bits of other plant material being cultured into synthetic dung. We subsequently camped there for 27 weekends, between 1972 and 1974, elucidating the story behind these observations, which still stands as one of the most complex and bizarre dung beetle behaviours known (Monteith and Storey 1981). I was also impressed by the young Canadian's vow that our July 1973 mid-winter camp in the subtropical rainforest was the coldest he had ever been, but I reminded him that the bears, at least, were just koalas.

Ross joined the Entomological Society of Queensland and attended his first meeting the same month that he arrived in Brisbane. He barely missed a meeting during the years he was in Brisbane. Soon after joining he became News Bulletin Editor, for two years (1973-74), and often brightened up the pages with his own excellent drawings of beetles. He remained a member until his death.

Ross rapidly acquired a car and used every minute of leave to explore dung beetles around the Brisbane area (Fig. 3). He soon ventured further afield, heading north to Mackay in the first year and up to the Wet Tropics and south to Victoria in the second, almost always travelling and camping alone.

After two years, his initial blowfly job ran out, but Dr Elizabeth Exley, a bee taxonomist in the same UQ Department, had just received a major ABRS grant to study tiny native bees and she took Ross on as her assistant for another two years. This involved adventurous trips to Darwin and Kakadu in 1974, and right across to Broome and the Kimberleys in 1975. They collected with super-long nets to harvest tiny euryglossine bees from tall flowering gum trees (Fig. 2) and everywhere they went Ross collected dung beetles.

In 1975, the noted Canadian entomologist Henry Howden, the doyen of North American scarabaeologists, visited Brisbane with his coleopterist wife Ann and they met Ross there. Their Canada/scarab commonality made them firm friends and they collaborated on many projects to do with scarab beetles over the next 25 years (Fig. 4). Henry and Ann were often guests in Ross' Mareeba house in later years and an important joint paper with Ross was their study of perching behaviour of dung beetles at Wongabel State Forest (Howden *et al.* 1991).



Figs 1-3. Ross Storey. (1) soon after starting work at the University of Queensland in 1972; (2) wielding the long net on a bee-collecting expedition around 1975; (3) with Ian Naumann (at right) beside Ross' car and camper on the way to Bulburin State Forest in 1973. Ross exhibits the unmistakeable action of pulling the ring-pull from a beer can; in this and Fig. 2 he wears the Aussie 'Jackie Howe' navy blue singlet which became his signature dress for field work.

Mareeba years

As his second grant position at UQ drew to a close at the end of 1975, Ross' future became unclear. Ian Cunningham, then a senior entomologist with the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and who had undertaken a Ph.D in the UQ Entomology Department in 1974-75, knew Ross well and recognised his qualities. At the completion of his degree, Ian became Officer-in-charge of the newly upgraded DPI laboratories in Mareeba, a large country centre in the tropics west of Cairns, on the northern edge of the fertile Atherton Tableland. Ian appointed Ross to an experimentalist position at Mareeba in early 1976 and Ross packed his life into his little car and headed north to a new life in the tropics. He held that position until his death 32 years later. His initial duties were to assist with crop pest research on tobacco, that being the major Mareeba crop at that time (see Fay 2010), but Ian gave Ross his taxonomic head and he set out to develop a reference collection and provide much-needed taxonomic support for all aspects of NQ entomology.

At this time, Ross' great personal burden began to reveal itself. At age 16 he had been diagnosed with a rare muscle-wasting disease called 'inclusion body myositis'. Its cause and cure are unknown, it strikes only 5 per million, its progress is very slow with muscles in the hands and legs being the first to decline, and with eventual complete loss of mobility, including breathing. Ross' first method of dealing with this was to ignore it. He bought a new Subaru 4WD, put a camper on the roof and set out on years of field trips, mostly at weekends and on annual leave, into remote parts of Cape York Peninsula, the Northern Territory and Western Australia, as well as throughout the rainforests of the nearby Wet Tropics. Much of it was by himself and, as his condition worsened, he devised all sorts of tricks to be able to cope with camping on his own. He used malaise, pitfall and flight intercept traps widely and when, from the early 1990s, he could no longer do field work himself, he had friends and colleagues run traps for him and bring him the samples to sort and mount. These traps yielded many specimens of amazingly modified myrmecophilous aphodiine scarabs, necessitating new genera and a new tribe to accommodate them (e.g. Storey and Howden 1996).

During the 1980s and 1990s there was much research activity in the nearby Wet Tropics region, due to funding arising from its listing as a World Heritage Area. Ross' home was a welcome respite from arduous field work for many visiting entomologists, especially those from the Queensland Museum and the Australian National Insect Collection. They could be assured of baths, beds, de-leeching, convivial meals and much chat about beetles. The meticulous collection he had built up during his active years was an invaluable resource for this work by many and Ross himself participated in major reviews of some of the dung beetle groups (e.g. Reid and Storey 2000, Storey and Monteith 2000). His co-authored field guide (Zborowski and Storey 1995) has been a great success, with several reprintings.



Figs 4-5. Ross Storey. (4) with fellow beetle collectors at Paluma in 1989; from left: Ernie Adams, Anne Howden, Eddie Adams, Ross Storey, Joy Burns, Gordon Burns [photo by Henry Howden]; (5) on the terrace of his Mareeba home a few months before his death in 2008.

About 10 years ago, Ross went into a wheelchair permanently. He moved to a country home outside Mareeba (Fig. 5) with his friend and carer Trish Scammell. His electrically-operated chair had a beetle set in clear resin as the control knob and initially it just meant that Ross was now faster than the rest of us. But the progress of his disease slowly took its toll and, although he maintained his DPI job through the love and care of his colleagues, he was not able to work independently with specimens in later years. This was an enormous frustration for him but, as with everything about his condition, it was never voiced by the relentlessly cheerful Ross Storey that we all knew.

Ross made an enormous contribution despite his handicap. His more than 35 publications were listed by Daniels (2004). He described 4 new genera and 59 new species (Appendix 1), but the most telling indication of the respect his colleagues bore for him is that no fewer than 56 species, 3 genera and 1 subfamily were named in his honour (see lists on pages 170 and 242 of this issue), including the magnificent rhinoceros beetle *Pseudoryctes storeyi* Carne (see Frontispiece to this volume: page vi). You did well, Ross.

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Appendix 1. New taxa of Coleoptera described by Ross Storey

Ross Storey authored or co-authored the following four genera and 59 species of Coleoptera, mostly Scarabaeidae.

Genera

SCARABAEIDAE: APHODIINAE

Australoxenella Howden & Storey, 1992 (Australia)

Bruneixenus Howden & Storey, 1992 (Brunei)

Daintreeola Howden & Storey, 2000 (Australia)

Monteitheolus Howden & Storey, 2000 (Fiji)

Species

DYTISCIDAE

Carabhydrus mubboonus Larson & Storey, 1994 (Australia)

SCARABAEIDAE: APHODIINAE

Australoxenella bathurstensis Howden & Storey, 1992 (Australia)

Australoxenella concinna Storey & Howden, 1996 (Australia)

Australoxenella humptydoensis Howden & Storey, 1992 (Australia)

Australoxenella kalpara Storey & Howden, 1996 (Australia)

Australoxenella midgee Storey & Howden, 1996 (Australia)

Australoxenella mirreen Storey & Howden, 1996 (Australia)

Australoxenella moogoon Storey & Howden, 1996 (Australia)

Australoxenella peckorum Storey & Howden, 1996 (Australia)

Australoxenella teeta Storey & Howden, 1996 (Australia)

Australoxenella wurrock Storey & Howden, 1996 (Australia)

Australoxenella zborowskii Storey & Howden, 1996 (Australia)

Bruneixenus reidi Howden & Storey, 2000 (Indonesia)

Bruneixenus squamosus Howden & Storey, 1992 (Brunei)

Daintreeola grovei Howden & Storey, 2000 (Australia)

Monteitheolus fijiensis Howden & Storey, 2000 (Fiji)

SCARABAEIDAE: SCARABAEINAE

Aptenocanthos jimara Storey & Monteith, 2000 (Australia)

Aptenocanthos kabura Storey & Monteith, 2000 (Australia)

Aptenocanthos monteithi Storey, 1984 (Australia)

Aptenocanthos speewah Storey & Monteith, 2000 (Australia)

Aptenocanthos winyar Storey & Monteith, 2000 (Australia)

Aptenocanthos wollumbin Storey & Monteith, 2000 (Australia)

Aulacopris matthewsi Storey, 1986 (Australia)

Onthophagus arkoola Storey & Weir, 1990 (Australia)

Onthophagus beelarong Storey & Weir, 1990 (Australia)

Onthophagus bindaree Storey & Weir, 1990 (Australia)

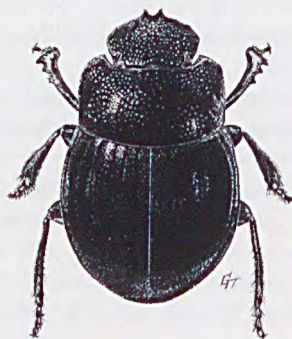
Onthophagus binyana Storey & Weir, 1990 (Australia)

Onthophagus bundara Storey & Weir, 1990 (Australia)

Onthophagus cooloola Storey & Weir, 1990 (Australia)

Onthophagus dinjerra Storey & Weir, 1990 (Australia)

Onthophagus godarra Storey & Weir, 1990 (Australia)
Onthophagus gurburra Storey & Weir, 1990 (Australia)
Onthophagus kakadu Storey & Weir, 1990 (Australia)
Onthophagus kiambram Storey, 1977 (Australia)
Onthophagus kora Storey, 1977 (Australia)
Onthophagus mije Storey & Weir, 1990 (Australia)
Onthophagus mongana Storey & Weir, 1990 (Australia)
Onthophagus pinaroo Storey & Weir, 1990 (Australia)
Onthophagus punthari Storey, 1977 (Australia)
Onthophagus terrara Storey, 1977 (Australia)
Onthophagus trawalla Storey & Weir, 1990 (Australia)
Onthophagus wanappe Storey, 1977 (Australia)
Onthophagus weringerong Storey & Weir, 1990 (Australia)
Onthophagus williamsi Storey & Weir, 1990 (Australia)
Onthophagus worooa Storey & Weir, 1990 (Australia)
Onthophagus yackatoon Storey & Weir, 1990 (Australia)
Onthophagus yaran Storey & Weir, 1990 (Australia)
Onthophagus yarrumba Storey, 1977 (Australia)
Onthophagus yourula Storey & Weir, 1990 (Australia)
Temnoplectron cooki Reid & Storey, 2000 (Australia)
Temnoplectron finnigani Reid & Storey, 2000 (Australia)
Temnoplectron lewisense Reid & Storey, 2000 (Australia)
Temnoplectron monteithi Reid & Storey, 2000 (Australia)
Temnoplectron wareo Reid & Storey, 2000 (New Guinea)
Tesserodon erratum Storey, 1991 (Australia)
Tesserodon feehani Storey, 1991 (Australia)
Tesserodon henryi Storey, 1991 (Australia)
Tesserodon hilleri Storey, 1991 (Australia)
Tesserodon simplicipunctatum Storey, 1991 (Australia)



Left, *Aulacopris matthewsi* Storey male; right, *Aptenocanthon monteithi* Storey.